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SPONGE USED FOR HOUSE COVERING, TIBURON ISLAND

[p. 112 A]

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301 [304] The second mutilation was the only corporeal modification noted by early missionaries and explorers—it was the perforation of the nasal septum for the insertion of a skewer, perhaps of polished stone (though doubtless more commonly of bone), to which swinging objects were attached. One of the most useful records is that of the Jesuit, Padre [114] Joseph Och, who described the nasal attachment as a small, colored stone suspended by cords from the perforated septum, and guarded with such jealous veneration that "one must give them at least a horse or a cow for one" (ante, p. 78); while according to Hardy's record, the nasal fetish is "a small, round, white bone, 5 inches in length, tapering off at both ends, and rigged something like a cross-jack yard."[1]

[237] [291]

FIG. 7.—Snake-skin belt.

The custom is apparently obsolete, and nothing is known directly of details or motives.

301 304 Excepting these mutilations the corporeal decoration of the Seri is apparently limited to the face-painting: among the 60 individuals at Costa Rica in 1894 there was no trace of tattooing or scarification of face, limbs, or body; there were no labrets or earrings, and neither lips nor ears were pierced, nor were nasal septa observed to be perforated in accordance with the reputed ancient custom; the teeth were neither filed nor drilled; no indications of amputation or other maiming (save the removal of the incisors) were observed—indeed, the instinct for physical markings of symbolic or decorative character, which seems to be normal to primitive men, was apparently satisfied by the prevalent and persistent face-painting among the females.

291 The extra-corporeal decorative devices are of a meagerness and pov-

[1] Travels, p. 286.

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29/ erty even transcending the poor apparel, flimsy habitations, and generally ill-developed artifacts of the lowly tribe.

[237] The most prominent personal possession is the pelican-skin robe; it is usually made of six skins, slightly dressed and in full plumage, sewed together with sinew in a conventional pattern of such sort as to give the greatest possible expanse consistent with the irregular outlines of the individual skins, and at the same time to display a conventional color pattern on the feathered side, the colors ranging from the dorsal slate to the ventral white of the fowl (as indicated in plate XXIII); sometimes there are only four skins and rarely there are eight, but the conventional arrangement is maintained. Before the beginning of a

[301] [824]

FIG. 5.—Dried flower necklace.

[177] fairly regular barter at Rancho de Costa Rica, and hence before the introduction of manta and other stuffs, the pelican-skin robes were supplemented by kilts made of mesquite root or other fibers, spun and twisted in the fingers and woven probably on some primitive device no longer in use; but so far as is known these native fabrics were devoid of decorative patterns in color or weave. Less habitually a short wammus or shirt, with long sleeves, made of a material similar to that of the kilt, was worn; but it, too, was without ornamentation, so far as can be ascertained. The remaining article of utilitarian apparel is the belt, usually consisting of a strip of skin (of deer, rabbit, peccary, etc), slightly dressed with the hair on; frequently this is replaced by a cord or braided band of human hair, while the favorite belt of some of the

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life of the tribe rotates: since the clans never reside and rarely camp nearer than 3 to 15 miles from the aguaje, a large part of the water consumed must be transported great distances in these vessels; since the region is one of extreme aridity, the lives of small parties often depend on the integrity of the olla and on the care with which the fragile vessel is protected from shock or overturning; and hence the utensil must occupy a large if not a dominant place in everyday thought—indeed, the fact that it does so is attested by constant custom and also by its employment as the most conspicuous among

FIG. 14—Rattlesnake necklace.

the mortuary sacrifices. Thus, the relation of the Seri olla to its makers and users is parallel with that of the ever-present earthen pot to the Pueblo people, or that of the cooking basket to the acorn-eaters of California, save that its relative importance is enhanced by the fewness of activital lines and motives in Seri life. Moreover, this most characteristic utensil is established and hallowed in Seri thought by immemorial associations: its sherds are sown over the hundred thousand square miles of ancient "despoblado" from Tiburon to Caborca, Magdalena, Rio Opodepe, and Cerro Prieto, and are scattered through the 20 feet of shells forming Punta Antigualla (perhaps the oldest shell mound of America); and all the sherds from the range

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dishes, or even as kettles, in the rare culinary operations of the tribe (as shown in plate X); but the entire vessels appear to be religiously devoted to their primary purpose.

While some three-fourths of the observed fictile ware of the Seri and a still larger proportion of the scattered sherds represent conventional ollas, there are a few erratic forms. The most conspicuous of these is a smaller, thicker-walled, and larger-necked type, of which three or four examples were observed; two of these were in use (one is represented lying at the left of the jacal in plate X), and another was found cracked and abandoned on the desert east of Playa Noriega. The vessels of this type are used primarily as kettles and only incidentally as canteens. In both form and function they suggest accultural origin; but the ware is much like that of the conventional type. Another erratic type takes the form of a deep dish or shallow bowl, of rather thick walls and clumsy form, which may be accultural; a single example was observed in use (it is shown in plate XIV). There are also mortuary forms, including a miniature olla (figure 39) and bowl (figure 41), and such still smaller examples as those illustrated in figures 17 and 18. In addition to the utensils a few fictile figurines were found. Most of these were crude or distorted animal effigies, and one (broken) was a rudely shaped and strongly caricatured female figure some 2 inches high, with exaggerated breasts and pudenda. Analogy with neighboring tribes suggests that the very small vessels and the figurines are fetishistic appurtenances to the manufacture of the pottery; e. g., that the fetish is molded at the same time and from the same material as the olla, and is then burned with it, theoretically as an invocation against cracking or other injury, but practically as a "draw-piece" for testing the progress of the firing.

FIG. 17.—Symbolic mortuary olla.

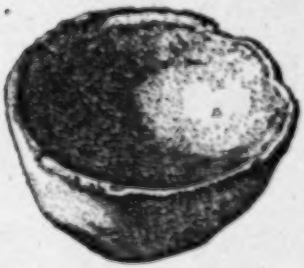

FIG. 18.—Symbolic mortuary dish.

By far the most numerous of the utensils connected with potable water are drinking-cups and small bowls or dishes; but these are merely molluscan shells of convenient size, picked up alongshore, used once or oftener, and either discarded or carried habitually without other treatment than the natural wear of use (an example is illustrated in figure 19). Larger bowls or trays are improvised from entire carapaces of the tortoise (probably *Gopherus agassizii*), which are carried considerable distances; and still larger emergency water-vessels consist of carapaces of the green turtle (*Chelonia agas-*

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sizii), laid inverted in the jacales; these shells also being used in natural condition. No wrought shells, molluscan or chelonian, were observed in use or found either in the jacales or on the hundreds of abandoned sites; but the vicinage of the rancherias, the abandoned camps and house sites, and the more frequented paths are bestrewn with slightly worn shells, evidently used for a time and then lost or discarded. The relative abundance of the fictile ware and this natural shell ware in actual use is about 1:3; i. e., each adult female usually possesses a single olla of the conventional type, and there may be one or two extra ollas and two or three clay dishes in each band or clan, while each matron or marriageable maid is usually supplied with two to four shell-cups and each little girl with one or two; and there are twice as many carapace trays as clay dishes. The disproportion of

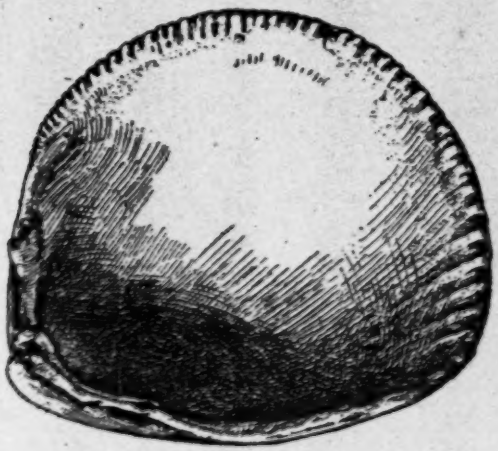

FIG. 19—Shell-cup.

pottery and shell about the abandoned sites is naturally much greater; for the former is the most highly prized industrial possession of the women, while the shells are easily gained and lightly lost.

With respect to solid food the Seri may be deemed omniverous though their adjustment to habitat is such that they are practically carniverous.

The most conspicuous single article in the dietary of the tribe is the local green turtle. This chelonian is remarkably abundant throughout Gulf of California; but its optimum habitat and breeding-place would appear to be El Infiernillo, whose sandy beaches are probably better adapted to egg laying and hatching than any other part of the coast. Here it has been followed by the Seri; perhaps half of the aggregate life of the tribe is spent within easy reach of its feeding and breeding grounds, and tribesman and turtle have entered into an inimical com-

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munalty something like that of Siouan Indian and buffalo in olden time, whereby both may benefit and whereby the more intelligent communal certainly profits greatly. The flesh of the turtle yields food; some of its bones yield implements; its carapace yields a house covering, a convenient substitute for umbrella or dog-tent, a temporary buckler, and an emergency tray or cistern, as well as a comfortable cradle at the beginning of life and the conventional coffin at its end; while the only native foot-gear known is a sandal made from the integument of a turtle-flipper.

FIG. 20.—Turtle-harpoon.

Doubtless the eggs and newly hatched young of the turtle are eaten, and analogy with other peoples indicates that the females are sometimes captured at the laying grounds or on their way back to water; but observation is limited to the taking of the adult animal at sea by means of a specialized harpoon. A typical specimen of this apparatus, as constructed since the introduction of flotsam iron, is illustrated in figure 20. It comprises a point 3 or 4 inches long, made from a nail or bit of stout wire, rudely sharpened by hammering the tip (cold) between cobbles, and dislodging the loosened scales and splinters by thrusts and twirlings in the ground; this is set firmly and cemented with mesquite gum into a foreshaft of hard wood, usually 4 or 5 inches long, notched to receive a cord and rounded at the proximal end; the rounded end of this foreshaft fits into a socket of the main shaft, which may be either a cane-stalk (as shown in the figure) or a section of mesquite root; while a stout cord is firmly knotted about the foreshaft and either attached to the distal portion of the main shaft or carried along it to the hand of the user. The main shaft is usually 10 or 12 feet long, with the harpoon socket in the larger end, and is manipulated by a fisherman sitting or standing on his balsa. On catching sight of a turtle lying in the water, he approaches stealthily, preferably from the rear yet in such wise as not to cast a frightening shadow, sets the foreshaft in place, guides the point close to the carapace, and then by a quick thrust drives the metal through the shell. The frictional resistance between the chitin and the metal holds the point in place, and although the foreshaft is jerked out at the first movement of the transfixed animal the cord prevents escape; and after partial tiring

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monly the carapace and the longer bones from the flippers of the larger specimens are preserved entire for other uses, and are cleaned only by teeth and talons and tongues, aided by time but not by fire; but the plastron, unless broken up and consumed immediately, is subjected to a cooking process in which it serves at once as skillet and cutlet—it is laid on the fire, flesh side up, and at intervals the shriveling tissues are clawed off and devoured, while at last the scorched or charred scutes themselves are carried away to be eaten at leisure.[1]

Perhaps the most significant fact connected with the Seri turtle-fishing is the excellent adaptation of means to ends. The graceful and effective balsa is in large measure an appurtenance of the industry; the harpoon is hardly heavier and is much simpler than a trout-fishing tackle, yet serves for the certain capture of a 200-pound turtle; and the art of fishing for a quarry so shy and elusive that Caucasians may spend weeks on the shores without seeing a specimen is reduced to a perfection even transcending that of such artifacts as the light harpoon and fragile olla. Hardly less significant is the nonuse of that nearly universal implement, the knife, in every stage of the taking and consumption of the characteristic tribal prey; for it may fairly be inferred that the comparative inutility of the knife in dissevering the hard and horny chelonian derm, and the comparative effectiveness of the shell-breaking and bone-crushing hapf, have reacted cumulatively on the instincts of the tribe to retard the adoption of cutting devices. Of much significance, too, is the limited cooking process; for the habitual consumption of raw flesh betokens a fireless ancestry at no remote stage, while the crude cooking of (and in) that portion of the shell not consecrated to other uses might well form the germ of broiling or boiling on the one hand and of culinary utensils on the other hand. On the whole, the Seri turtle industry indicates a delicate adjustment of both vital and activital processes to a distinctive environment, in which the abundant chelonian fauna ranks as a prime factor.

Analogy with other primitive peoples would indicate that the flesh of the turtle is probably tabu to the Turtle clan, that the consumption of the quarry is preceded by an oblation, and that there are seasonal or other ceremonial rites connected with turtle-fishing; but no information has been obtained on any of these points save a few vague and unwilling suggestions from Mashém tending to establish the analogy.

Flotsam and stolen metal have played a rôle in the industries of Seriland so long that it is difficult to learn much of the turtle-fishing

[1] These details were furnished largely by Mashem and Señor Encinas, but were verified in essentials by personal observation of dietetic customs at Costa Rica in 1895; and they were corroborated by observations on both shores of El Infiernillo and Bahía Kunkaak in 1895. Especially significant were the remnants of a turtle feast on the southern beach of Punta Miguel interrupted by the approach of the exploring party. The indications were clear that the turtle had been landed and largely consumed before the fire was kindled, and that the cooking of the firmer portions had hardly been commenced before the camp was abandoned so hurriedly that not only the nearly eaten turtle and the glowing embers, but the harpoon (the specimen illustrated in figure 39), the still bloody coal greasy hapf (that represented in plate LIV), and the fire-sticks were left behind. Gnawed fragments of charred plastrons are common relics about hastily abandoned camps generally.

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174 177 411 during prenatal times; but an intimation from Mashém that the old men thought it much better to take the turtle with the teeth of an "animal that goes in the water", and the similarity in terms for "harpoon" (or arrow) and "teeth" both suggest that the aboriginal point may have been a sea-lion tooth, and that the foreshaft itself may have been a larger tooth of seal or cetacean. While the modern harpoon is shaped with the aid of metal (hoop-iron, etc.), the forms are quite evidently vestigial of knifeless manufacture, in which a naturally rounded or abraded or fire-shaped foreshaft was fitted into the natural socket afforded by a cane-stalk broken at its weakest point—i. e., just below the joint; and both function and socket arrangement (as well as the linguistic evidence) strongly suggest the cylindrical tooth as the germ of the apparatus.

223 It is probable that water-fowl, considered collectively, stand second in importance as Seri prey; and the foremost fowl is undoubtedly the pelican, which serves not only as a fruitful food-supply but as the chief source of apparel.

The principal haunt and only known breeding ground of the pelican in the Gulf of California is Isla Tasmo, an integral part of Seriland; and while the great birds are doubtless taken occasionally in Bahia Kunkaak, El Infiernillo, Bahia Tepoka, and other Seri waters, this island is the principal pelican hunting ground. According to Mashém's account, the chase of the pelican here is a well-organized collective process: at certain seasons, or at least at times deemed propitious by the shamans, pelican harvests are planned; and after some days of preparation a large party assemble at a certain convenient point (presumably Punta Antigualla) and await a still evening in the dark of the moon. When all conditions are favorable they set out for the island at late twilight, in order that it may be reached after dark; on approaching the shore the balsas are left in charge of the women, while the warriors and the larger boys, armed only with clubs, rush on the roosting fowls and slaughter them in great numbers—the favorite coup de grâce being a blow on the neck. The butchery is followed by a gluttonous feast, in which the half-famished families gorge the tenderer parts in the darkness, and noisily carouse in the carnage until overcome by slumber. Next day the matrons select the carcasses of least injured plumage and carefully remove the skins, the requisite incisions being made either with the edge of a shell-cup or with a sharp sliver of cane-stalk taken from an injured arrow or a broken balsa-cane. The feast holds for several days, or until the last bones are picked and the whole party sated, when the clans scatter at will, laden with skins and lethargic from the fortnight's food with which each maw is crammed.

[231] [281]

Mashém's recital gave no indication as to whether the Pelican clan participate in the hunting orgies, though it clearly implies that the chase and feast are at least measurably ceremonial in character; and this implication was strengthened by the interest and comparative

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224 While by far the larger share of Seri sustenance is drawn from the sea, a not inconsiderable portion is derived from the land; for the warriors and striplings and even the women are more skilful hunters than fishers.

The larger objects of the feral chase are deer of two or three species (the bura, or mule-deer, being most conspicuous and easiest taken), antelope, and mountain sheep; to which the puma, the jaguar, and perhaps two or three other carnivores might be added. The conventional method of taking the bura and other deer is a combination of stalking and coursing, usually conducted by five of the younger warriors, though three or four may serve in emergency; any excess over five being regarded as superfluous, or as a confession of inferiority. The chase is conducted in a distinctly ceremonial and probably ritualistic fashion, even when the finding of the game is casual, or incidental to a journey: at sight of the quarry, the five huntsmen scatter stealthily in such manner as partially to surround it; when it takes fright one after the other strives to show himself above the shrubbery or dunes in order to break its line of flight into a series of zigzags; and whether successful in this effort or not they keep approximate pace with it until it tires, then gradually surround it, and finally rush in to either seize it in their hands or cripple it with clubs—though the latter procedure is deemed undignified, if not wrong, and hardly less disreputable than complete failure. When practicable the course is laid toward the ranchería or camp; and in any event the ideal finish is to bring the animal alive into the family group, where it may be dissected by the women, and where the weaklings may receive due share of the much-prized blood and entrails. The dissection is merely a ravenous
264 rending of skin and flesh, primarily with the teeth (perhaps after oblique bruising or tearing by blows with the hupf over strongly flexed joints), largely with hands and fingers aided anon by a foot planted on the carcass, and partly with some improvised device, such as a horn or tooth of the victim itself, the serrated edge of a shell-cup, or perhaps a sharp-edged cane-splint from a broken arrow carried for emergency's sake. Commonly the entire animal, save skin and harder bones, is gulped at a sitting in which the zeal of the devotee and the frenzy of the carnivore blend; but in case the group is small and the quarry large, the sitting is extended by naps or prolonged slumberings, and
[252] the more energetic squaws may even trouble to kindle a fire and partially cook the larger joints, thereby inciting pallid appetite to new
[237] efforts. Finally the leg bones are split for the marrow and their ends preserved for awls; the horns are retained by the successful huntsmen
[281] as talisman-trophies; while the skin is stretched in the desert sun, scratched and gnawed free of superfluous tissue, rubbed into partial
224 pliability, and kept for bedding or robe or kilt.
857 The chase of the hare is closely parallel to that of the deer save that it is conducted by striplings, who thereby serve apprenticeship in hunt-

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uniform in size and texture; an inferior example appears in figure 34. The manes and tails of horses and other stock are also converted into cordage, of which the chief known application is in toy riatas. It is of no small significance that the most highly prized cordage material is human hair, and that its chief uses are connected with the person; that the next in order of diminishing preciousness is that derived from the fibrous plants, which is used in balsa-making, bowstrings, harpoon cords, etc, as well as in the native fabrics; and that the least prized material is that derived from imported animals, which is largely limited in its utilization to youthful imitation of Caucasian industries; for the association of material with function reflects a distinctive feature of

FIG. 34.—Mesquite-fiber rope.

primitive thought, akin to that displayed in somewhat higher culture as synecdochic magic, the doctrine of signatures, etc.

Partly because of that decadence of aboriginal devices correlated with acculturation, partly by reason of imperfect observation, practically nothing is known of Seri spinning and weaving, and little of Seri sewing. The religiously-guarded hair-combings are twisted in the fingers and wound on stick-bobbins without aid of mechanical appliances; and, so far as has been observed, the final making of hair cords is merely a continuation of the strictly manual process. The agave stipes and mesquite roots are alleged by vaqueros to be retted in convenient lagoons and barrancas (a statement corroborated by the finding of half a dozen sections of mesquite root soaking in a lagoon near Punta Anti-

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283 gualla by the 1895 expedition), and then hatcheled with the hupf or the edge of a shell; when the fibers are gathered in slender wisps or loosely wound coils, both of which were among the possessions of the Seri matrons at Costa Rica in 1894. So far as could be ascertained, the final processes parallel those of hair-cord making, i. e., the fibers are patiently sorted into strands, sized in the fingers and twisted by rolling on the thigh, the strands being subsequently combined in similar fashion.[1]

286 Neither the weaving nor the woven fabrics of the Seri have ever been seen by technologic students so far as known, though the fabrics are shown in Von Bayer's photographs and have been described by various observers. According to Señor Encinas, they resemble coarse bagging, and are woven or netted quite plainly. The ordinary sewing material is sinew, used in connection with a bone awl (a good example of which is illustrated in figure 35), a fish

FIG. 35.—Bone awl.

FIG. 36.—Wooden awls.

spine or bone, a cactus thorn, or either the mandible of a water-bird or a hard-wood skewer shaped after this natural needle (figure 36 *a* and *b*). Sometimes hair or vegetal fiber is substituted for the sinew; and for certain purposes an agave thorn, with the fibers naturally attached, serves for needle and thread.

[524] [1] A rope-twisting device of the Seri commonly employed by southwestern Indians was found in use by the Seri boys at Costa Rica in 1894, and was included in the Seri collection; but the indications were that the device was a mere toy used, like the horse-hair snake made by its aid, only in youthful sports.

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activities; i. e., in developed industries the tool is a primary factor, while in nascent industries it is but a collateral. 000

The tools of any primitive tribe may be defined as appliances used primarily in the production of implements and utensils, and incidentally in preparing food, making habitations, manufacturing apparel, building vehicles or vessels, etc—in short, the appliances used in producing devices for the maintenance of active life. The definition emphasizes both the dearth and the undifferentiated character of Seri tools; for the appliances used in the production of devices are exceedingly few, and are commonly employed also in food-getting or in other vital industries. 412

Perhaps the most conspicuous general fact in connection with Seri tools and their uses is the prevalence of natural objects employed either (1) in ways suggested by natural functions or (2) in ways determined by the convenience of users; the former grading into artificial devices shaped in similitude of natural objects and employed in ways suggested by natural functions.

Prominent among the natural objects employed in natural ways are mandibles of birds, used in piercing pelts and fabrics; fish spines and bones, also used as piercers; thorns of cacti and mimosas, used in similar ways; teeth and horns of game animals, used in rending their own tissues, and afterward in miscellaneous industrial processes; together with cane splints, used for incising. Frequently the employment of such objects is mere improvisation; yet, so far as could be ascertained through direct observation at Costa Rica, through Mashém's incomplete accounts, and through inquiries from residents on the frontier, even the improvisations are made in accordance with regular custom firmly fixed by associations—quite in the way, indeed, of primitive life generally, and of the physiologic and psychic processes from which primitive custom is so largely borrowed. With these objects may be grouped the turtle-shells and pelican-pelts used as shields against alien and animal enemies or as protectors against the elements; and the Seri sages would class with them the deer-head masks and deer-hoof rattles worn in the dance to at once symbolize and invoke strength and swiftness. One of the most striking among the artificial devices of symbolic motive is the piercer, or awl, of wood or bone, shaped in imitation of the avian mandible; yet still more significant in a vestigial way (provided the most probable inference as to genesis be valid) is the hard-wood foreshaft of arrow and harpoon, shaped and used in trenchant symbolism of the deadly tooth. [237] [237]

There are two conspicuous classes of natural objects employed in ways determined largely by the convenience of the users, viz, (*a*) marine shells and (*b*) beach pebbles. 237 412 415

The marine shells applied industrially comprise the prevailing local genera, *Cardium*, *Mactra*, *Area*, *Chama*, and others. They are used ordinarily as drinking-cups, dishes, dippers, receptacles for fats and fare-

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237 412 [415] paints, and as small utensils generally; and they are used nearly as commonly for scraping skins, severing animal and plant tissues, digging graves and waterholes, propelling balsas, and especially for scraping reeds and sticks and okatilla stems in the manufacture of arrows, harpoons, bows, balsas, and jacal-frames—indeed, the seashell is the Seri familiar, the ever-present handmate and helper, the homologue of the Anglo-Saxon Jack with his hundred word-compounds, a half-personified reflex of habitual action and thought. Ordinarily—always, so far as is known—the shells are used in the natural state, i. e., either in the condition of capture and opening for the removal of the animal, or in the condition of finding on the beach. For certain purposes the fresh and sharp-edged shell is doubtless preferable, and for others the well-worn specimen (like the paint cup illustrated in plate XXVII) is chosen; but everything indicates that the need for smoothed shells is met by selecting wave-worn specimens, and nothing indicates that the value of the appliance is deemed to be enhanced by wear of use—in fact, the abundance of abandoned shells about the rancherias and camp sites, and over all Seriland for that matter, indicates that the objects are discarded as easily as they are found along the prolific shores.

412 Next to the shells, the most abundant industrial appliances of the Seri are beach pebbles or cobbles. They are used for crushing shell and bone, for rending the skins of larger animals, for severing tendons and splintering bones, as well as for grinding or crushing seeds, uprooting canes, chopping trees and branches, driving stakes, and for the multifarious minor purposes connected with the manufacture of arrows and balsas and jacales; they are also the favorite women's weapons in warfare and the chase, and are sometimes used in similar wise by the warriors. The material for these appliances paves half the shores of Seriland, and is available in shiploads; and its use not only illustrates Seri handicraft in several significant aspects, but illumines one of the more obscure stages in the technologic development of mankind.

The cobble-stone implements of the Seri range from pebbles to bowlders, and there is a corresponding range in function from light hand-implements at one end of the series to unwieldy anvils and metates at the other end. The intermediate sizes are not infrequently utilized, and are customarily used interchangeably, the smaller of any two used in conjunction serving as the hand implement and the larger as the anvil or metate; yet there is a fairly definite clustering of the objects about two types, a larger and more stationary class, and a smaller and more portable one.

192 412 The Seri designation for the larger stone implement is that applied to rock generally, viz, *ahat* (the vowel broad, as in "father"); and it seems probable that the term is onomatopoetic, or mimetic of the sound produced in the use of the implement as a metate, and that its application to rocks generally is secondary. The designation applied to the

8: Ascher E-5 (1960) 1962 NU31 Seri NU31

McGee (1898:214)

262 estimated that maritime resources provided two-thirds of the Seri diet. Kroeber (1931: 20), approximately 30 years later, estimated the proportion at about three-fifths. In the winter of 1960, 30 years after Kroeber's visit, the Seri were obtaining at least three-fifths of their food from the sea.

226 In pursuit of their main source of subsistence, the Seri travel up
[221] and down the narrow coastal band. In the winter of 1960 they were
[361] occupying one temporary camp toward the southern end of the band
[462] and a permanent camp at the northern extreme. Seri women and
[867] children gather mollusks; fishing is a male occupation. In addition to gathering and fishing for their own needs, the Seri dispose of a
226 portion of their catch on the commercial market. This enterprise
439 began about 1930, and was encouraged by the establishment, in 1958,
474 of the Sociedad Cooperative de Produccion Pesquera Seri with the cooperation of the Mexican government.

225 The Pacific green turtle constitutes the largest single item in the
262 Seri diet for at least six months of the year—from January to June—and it is also caught occasionally at other seasons. In 1896 McGee estimated that it provided 25 per cent of the total food supply. Emphasizing the intimate ecological relationship between the Seri and the turtle, McGee (1898: 186-187) wrote:

> ... perhaps half of the aggregate life of the tribe is spent within easy reach of its [the turtle's] feeding and breeding grounds, and tribesman and turtle have entered into an inimical communality something like that of the Siouan Indian and buffalo in olden time. ...

[114] Kroeber (1931: 20) believed that McGee stressed the Seri-turtle relationship too strongly and overestimated its contribution to the diet.
237 McGee (1898: 187), in support of the importance of the turtle to the Seri, points to the fact that the turtle carapace is used for, among other things, a house covering and buckler, a cradle, a coffin, and footgear. The carapace is currently used for supporting and roofing houses and as a starvation food. The contribution of the turtle to
262 the diet varies from year to year, but observations made in 1960 suggest a range of from 15 to 20 per cent as a reasonable estimate.

225 Seri men fish for turtle from boats, which are manned by two or
[501] three men and are propelled by oars, sails, outboard engines, or any combination of the three. The boats operate either individually or in groups. The men fish by night or day, depending on the weather
[416] and sea conditions. When they fish at night, they use a kerosene lamp to attract turtles to the surface. The principal implement is the harpoon.

411 The harpoon tackle of the Seri is illustrated in Figure 1. It consists of a foreshaft (c-h), a mainshaft (j-k), and an extension cord (i). The component parts of the foreshaft are a projectile point (c), a gasket (d), a wrapping cord (f), a hafting base (g), and a lead cord (e and h). In preparation for turtle fishing, the hafting base (g) is plugged into the socket (j) on the main shaft (k), and the extension cord (i) is looped through the lead cord (h).

Coyote figures out probably

as an important and perhaps disreputable figure in the mythology although nothing but scraps and bits of information suggest this. It is possible that there is actually a taboo on eating this animal or perhaps it is so disreputable that eating its flesh would put a gourmant in an inferior position.

How important is the Seri mammalian diet is hard to tell. It certainly looms more heavily during the winter, because in the cool season hunting is easier than during the heat of the summer and in fact this is when most of it is done by the ardent hunters. Too, winter subjects the Seris to greater hazards and is apt to increase their dependence on the desert resources over that during the summer, even if these resources are scantier at that time.

To all of these animals one should add the semi-wild burros running about the extensive Mexican rancherias. The Indians poach on them frequently using their fire arms, usually the .22 caliber rifles. In any case, it appears that during the summer when the field work was carried out, the mammalian diet figures quite lightly on the Seri table.

Food preparation: Very little is done in the preparation of the mammalian meat. All that I could observe was the boiling of it in hot water spiced with salt. The Indians were saying that in order to have the meat of a peccary, deer or bighorn ready to eat one must boil it 2-3 hours. The same procedure is followed with the meat of the burros. In contrast to this, as shall be seen later, fish are boiled as well as roasted while the turtles are also dried and salted. Preparation of meat is done by women, certainly at least in the encampments when they are present.

Food preferences: Some of the Seri food preferences have already been mentioned. At the top of the list as the desirables are the peccary, the deer, the bighorn and the blacktail jackrabbit; at the bottom is the badger, whose meat "is not much good." There is also preference by sex. Females of both the bighorn and peccary are preferred over the males "because they do not have the bad odor like the males." This sort of favoritism also occurs among the Mexicans. However, the Indians did not elaborate beyond this point.

Other economic uses: Apart from meat, hides are also used. The hides of the deer, bighorn and peccary had been used for sleeping mats although this matter has been expressed in the past tense. Miguel Barnett also suggested that the bighorn hides had been used for clothing by the Indians in the past—but he neglected to say how long ago. During Kroeber's stays, no Seris went about in the animal or bird (pelican) skins but earlier when McGee visited them they went about in these simple garments. Judging then by Miguel's memory, the use of the bighorn hide for clothing must be pushed back to the period of World War I or even earlier.[1]

[1] Miguel Barnett indicated that the "fur" of the bighorn had once been worn for the cold season "but not now."

[P 10 A]

237 On the other hand, the hides of all of these three animals had been traded off to the Mexicans, [439] but this again was now discarded. This would [182] merely indicate the fluctuation of collapse of the demand from the outside rather than any intrinsic change in the Seri values.

Incidental use of the horns of the bighorn had been denied by all of the younger informants although admitted by Miguel Barnett. However, as I observed, the horns of this sheep are sometimes [415] used as drinking cups. Several of them were [181] lying around in the usual disorderly way of the Seris, now and then picked up for drinking and then again discarded. But the use of them struck me as most casual.

224 *Hunting:* Hunting takes a variety of forms 411 and includes a variety of weapons, from .22 caliber and .30/.30 caliber rifles to spear, stone and throwing stick. Bighorn and deer are followed on foot but without dogs, probably because without dogs they may be easier to surprise. This hunt takes place in daytime. But the peccary is hunted [231] with both the spear and the rifle and with a pack [885] of dogs, and only by the adult men. There is an emphasis on the "adult," this surely owing to the certain amount of danger connected with the chase of the peccaries. The weapons of the chase dwindle to the throwing stick or a stone when it comes to the jackrabbit. Badgers, I was told, are also killed with the same weapons. But formerly, the informants said, bow and arrow was much instrumental in hunting the smaller beasts.

* 825 Other animals, according to the Seris, are not [224] hunted now, nor had they been in the past. Justification for this ranged from the usual "because it isn't done" to the more specific reasons. The skunk is "neither hunted nor eaten because it [225] stinks." The whale is considered "too big to kill" while the killer whale is "too fierce." The harmless *tonita* (dolphin)[1] was reported somewhat hazily as "sometimes killed" but the comments were inconclusive and were denied by other informants.

[224] Two other species had been reported as hunted in the past but not at the present time. The Ringtail cat was supposedly hunted with the slings while the sea lion was hunted down "with a rifle [225] or rock but not with the harpoon because of its great strength, it would break the harpoon." This, however, was "perhaps 25 years ago." Why the sea lion is no longer pursued is uncertain, unless there is again a lack of demand from the outside while the Serian economy is so much centered on fishing.

231 *Pets:* How many species of animals are kept as pets on and off is difficult to say. Like most hunting and gathering groups the Seris are fond of pets but their interest in them depends entirely on an accidental capture. Among the wild mammals of the region there are few that could be captured and tamed easily. The badger which I mentioned already was the only mammal I saw

[237] [1] I have seen bones of beached whales used for stools and [352] also the skull of the *tonita* used as a chair. But it must be remembered that these animals got stranded on the beach. They were not deliberately hunted down.

[P. 10 B]

½ [Lie - deer, bighorn and peccary - Analyst]

262 pelicans are not; they are regarded as "bad food," unfit for eating. No further explanation has been offered here and it might be that the same sort of prejudice works here as in the case of the adult birds. Otherwise, reasons for rejecting eggs for food are probably a matter of mere customary attitude without any particular rationalization. In a few instances, the dove being one example, the eggs were said to have been rejected because they were "too small to bother."

237 291 Other economic uses made of the birds are extremely few. At one time, the pelican skins were used for clothing and, in fact, in McGee's time they represented, perhaps, the most important item of clothing for the Seris, having been worn in shape of wrap-around robes, usually covering the lower part of the body. Moreno reported these robes as still is use "30 years ago or more," in the early twenties, but in Kroeber's time these [177] robes were already discarded in favor of the European garment. The Seri, nevertheless, still preserve skins of these birds—the white pelican, [439] larger of the two, always had been favored here—and occasionally sell them to the visitors. Another 237 use made of the feather is in the arrows. The 411 cormorants, heron and the owls had been especially mentioned in this connection. But it is certain that they were not the only birds so exploited and also that this particular use went out of business along with the disappearance of the bow and arrow as the principal weapons. The use of feather for arrows may well continue into the present in a somewhat degraded form. The Seri boys play a [857] great deal with bows and arrows, shooting them at any moving available target. They'll pick up any available feathers.

Pets

231 Somewhat desultory use is made of birds as pets. During my visit I have seen doves and an egret kept in houses as pets by the adults and fed quite frequently. The number and variety of birds which may become pets in households may well * 825 be larger. Pelicans and sea-gulls are less fortunate. They are often shot at and over-powered by 857 the boys. But instead of taking them to the households, the boys stage games, shooting them at point blank from bows and arrows and pea- shooters. These somewhat bloody executions take place almost every day. The pattern is the same. Only the subject of the game changes, depending on the available species of bird or animal.

Hunting

223 It is hard to speak of hunting in connection with birds, because there is so little effort made to go out and get them. The main exception is the duck and this, as I already mentioned, is hunted on Isla Patos and clobbered at night with sticks and stones in great numbers. This is one of the few instances in which the Seris will go out of their way to get a bird. Sea-gulls and cormorants and, more rarely, pelicans are dispatched by pea-shooter (stone), sticks, small clubs and, on occa- [411] sion, with a shot from a .22 caliber rifle.

[P.18A]

9:Malkin E-5 (1953-1955)1962 NU31 Seri NU31

262 tions to San Esteban or San Lorenzo. The turtles
[225] now are as much a food as a "cash crop." While
the Seris are camped at Desemboque, most of the
[439] turtle catch is sold alive to the Mexican fish traders who are headquartered in Nogales and Hermosillo and take the catch along with the fishes to the markets in these towns and sometimes even as far as Phoenix and Tucson.

Of the remainder, the most frequent items that show up on the Seri table are probably the rattlesnakes and the desert tortoises. The rattlers are eaten with relish—only the heads and the tails are discarded as poisonous. The larger chuckawalla is considered a particular delicacy but is rarely caught because it lives in a somewhat distant region. The remainder of the animals listed as "eaten" are collected only incidentially.

It is probable that very few species are really left alone and not taken as food at various times, especially when famine distress overruns the camp. As far as I could determine, only three species are rejected as altogether unfit to eat: the gecko, the night lizard and the toad. All three are believed to be highly toxic "in flesh and blood" although real harm could be caused only by the toad. Besides, the two lizards are really tiny creatures and would make little difference when a survival is at stake.

*825 Few reptilians are ever used as anything but
food. The sea turtles in a way are at certain times,
[439] that is, when they are sold for hard cash to the
Mexican traders, whether live or sliced and salted.
● 237 The only other creature I ever heard about as being used for anything at all was the coral snake. At least one informant suggested that in the past its hide has been used for hat decoration. But coral snakes are scarce and this again could be only incidental. It may be that the rattlesnake hide, especially of the large specimens of the western
[439] diamondback, is sold occasionally to a passing visitor but this again is a rare occurance.*

Food Preparation

252 Food preparation of the majority of animals in
this group is no different than of most other ani-
[263] mals. They are simply skinned, tossed into a pot of boiling water and cooked, occasionally with salt as the only ingredient. Larger individuals, notably turtles, will be quartered and then boiled or roasted on a grill. The chuckawalla and the desert tortoise are said to be fried, but whether this is the usual procedure I can't say, because only a few of them had been brought into camp in my presence. The tail of the Gila monster supposedly had been fried in oil "in the past."

Food Preferences and Taboos

262 It is obvious that some creatures in this group
are considered better food than others. The chuck-
awalla is especially favored. When several were brought in from San Esteban, I couldn't persuade the owners to part with them, although I offered a huge price (for local conditions). The captors took

*Another use in the past—snake-skin belt worn. It is illustrated by McGee (1898:170, Fig. 7).

[291]

[P. 23A]

262 en simply because their flesh is disliked and unfit for human consumption. But it may also well be that some of them, especially of the giant variety, are not eaten simply because they are far too large to tackle and the Seris fear hunting them.

The Seris indicated also in some cases that larger specimens of fishes are eaten when they reach the size which would justify the effort. This is true of *Malacoctenus zonifer* which they indicated is "eaten when large," that is when at least 10 cm. long.

[226] Although only sometimes did the Seris specifically indicate that certain fishes are used for bait, it is very likely that almost all small or lesser fishes are so used.

262 178 In some cases the Indians indicated changes in preference for given fishes, with the time. For unexplained reason *Gymnothorax castaneus*, the morene, has been claimed to have been eaten in the past but not for the last 11 years. It isn't clear why the figure of 11 had been used and why suddenly in the early 40's they should stop eating it while the Mexican drool over it. But it may be also that here we have merely personal preference of the informants, as so often happens. As for the *pescara* it was formerly taken for food [439] but now it is merely sold to the Mexicans. This practice is increasing also to include the immense *mero*, even larger than the *pescara*. The fish is mainly sold but rarely eaten by the Seris themselves.

Food Preparation and Preferences

252 Food preparation is simple and in the main differs not at all from the preparation of other animal diet. The fish are either boiled whole or in part or else are roasted over slow fire on a grill. The entrails are usually discarded, but otherwise the beasts are eaten entire, eyes, brains and the rest, while the tiny fishlets are eaten complete with the scales and guts.

262 As for the preferences, as expected, there are some fishes that the Seri like better than others. The *bava* in the first place and the *pinto* in the second lead the list. The Seri prefer them to all others and consider them a real delicacy. On the other hand, there are some fishes that they'll eat only under protest, meaning when times are hard. *Girella simplicidens* is one such creature. The *Puerco* or *Cochi* is another. I have seen boat loads of puercos brought in with the other fish and un- [231] ceremoniously dumped out on the beach to the dogs. Literally! The Seris took to this fish only when fishing was poor during the wintry days when they were held ashore by the weather. Even [183] then, they tried to eat the despised creatures on the sly, avoiding being seen doing this, and when I or the Mexicans picked up fresh fish from the beach to take home they laughed saying that we acted as a *cochi* (pig) would!

Other Economic Uses

* 825 ● 237 322 One use made of fish concerns two species of sharks, the *chato* and *camposo*. Here, the informants claimed, the oil from their liver had been used in earlier times for polishing wood. This is

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quite possible but I couldn't substantiate the story from contemporary evidence. Perhaps during the height of the shark hunting for the liver oil, the Seris used the oil also for wood polish, although it isn't very clear just what sort of artifact they make would require such treatment. The wooden tools or artifacts among them are in short supply at all times. Finally, the huge horned manta was supposedly hunted also for its hide but just in what circumstances it was not explained. It is the only fish which the Seri ever mentioned as having been put to such use.

Fishing

As already mentioned, fishing nowadays is largely accompanied from flat-bottomed boats with hook and line. The old ways of getting fish by spearing are almost gone for good. Recently, an attempt has been made to teach the Seris siene fishing; but 10 years of these endeavors accomplished only ruination of a number of expensive nets and of much fishing gear and the desertion of the project by the Indians. It may be that their individualistic and almost anarchistic attitudes preclude cooperation, essential in this type of fishing.

The bait is obtained in any one of the three ways: by dynamiting fish in tide pools or along the shore, or by catching small fry with small hook and line, or finally by collecting small fishlets in the tide pools, prying them out from under rocks or simply—and here the Seri boys excel—by shooting them in the tide pools with tiny toy arrows or simply spearing them with a stick. The dynamiting is done with the purchased sticks of dynamite which the Seris obtain in the tiendas. The procedure is often risky and down right dangerous. Some of the Seris have blown themselves up with dynamite. I have seen one of them, who lost both arms and had a jaw broken during a dynamiting trial. He went about with a dirty rag tied up over his head to support the wrecked jaw-bone. He was carried off by measles two years later in the 1955 epidemic.

The Seris' commercial fishing is pretty much controlled and exploited by the two or three Mexican fish traders from Nogales and Hermosillo. These have their tiendas in Desemboque, which at set price sell things to the villagers. They also provide the Indians with the five horse-power motors for fishing trips and pleasure cruises and with the oil and gasoline essential to run these—also at set price. They finally purchase the fish—at a set price—and from the proceeds the Seris purchase goods at the tiendas, completing the cycle. Not all Seris are compelled to work for the Mexicans, and, in fact, they do not always do so. Some families stay away from Desemboque and depend on the sail and oars for propulsion. They come to the village only once every few months to obtain supplies. Even when in the village, the Seris make little effort to fish for more than they wish to get in order to satisfy their immediate needs.

Fishing expeditions usually take place in the morning. Most Seris will set off before daybreak and will return with the catch by 11 a.m. or noon.

301 worn. I have observed women wearing necklaces
+ 825 of the former and women and very young boys of the latter. The olive shell, incidentally, is made into two sorts, the natural, unroasted shells which retain a greenish-purple, mottled color and the white. The white pallid color is achieved by roasting the shells over fire. The necklaces are mostly made up of either colored or white but occasionally they may be made of mixed shells and then they are usually alternately interlaced, now with one, now with another.

* 825 b) *Utensils:* Two species had been reported used as occasional drinking or dipping cups and spoons. *Lavicardium elatum* and *Ficus ventricosus*. *Ficus* is presently discarded, but the *Lavicardium* is still occasionally used so. There is no doubt that the incidental use of these shells increases during longer fishing expeditions when the Seris are apt to lose some of their gear.

[412] [415]

[436] c) *Money:* Interestingly, the brown cowry was supposed to have been used as a means of exchange, as money—in the past. If this is so, then the selection of this shell for such purpose is not surprising considering its widespread use throughout the world.

[171]

439 d) *Trade:* Altogether 12 species had been re-
+ 825 ported as traded off either in the past or present. The trade importance of various species of shells varies with the demand of the market and sometimes may be only sporadic and short-lived. Only a few of the species had been indicated as having been of any trade importance in the past, and it may well be that the Seris did not register the species which may have been briefly sold to and outsiders during the short-lived fads of demand. It may be said in general that the trade importance of the shells increases and that greater variety of them are exploited now than formerly. This is surely owing to the increasing accessibility of the Seri country and the increasing tourism, not only visitors from Hermosillo, but also from such far flung places as Tucson, Phoenix and even Los Angeles.

[177]

In some instances, the Seris had no idea what the shells were sold for. The augur shell is on and off sold to some American traders who show up in Desemboque once in a while and for whom the Seri women accumulate these shells. But what uses were made of these, the Indians surely didn't know. Neither did they know what uses were made of the *Murex* shell and the *Turbo*, both of which were periodically sold in bulk to Hermosillo. On the other hand, they had some idea what uses were made of some other shells. *Pteria* and *Atrina* contain pearls and these are much desired. Especially the pearls of *Atrina* which are sold to the Mexicans or to the visitors for 25-50 pesos each and therefore have immense value, for the local market. The *Pteria* shells are said to be used for button making, and the Seris themselves claim that they make buttons of this shell. The most important of all, however, at least at the time of my visits in 1953 and 1955, was the olive shell. It was easily the most commonly and most numerously collected shell of all that the Seris ever collected. Owing to the scarcity of it in Desembo-

[435]

● [237]

[226]

000 wear ceremonial feathers as did our western Indians. I saw no skin or
164 cutaneous disease, or evidence of tuberculosis or of trachoma---the curse of our Indians.

142 One boy-child of five years was a handsome child---fat, round,
302 sturdy, with roving great black eyes, large thick lips, a picture of
[241] perfect health. He was almost naked. His hair was done in a pigtail
[657] with a red string braided into it. His face like all the others was dirty, but he waded into the shallow water with a short spear and I saw him catch two crabs with his little harpoon. The water did not bother his face.

415 They had no plates or eating tools, except large deep clam shells,
412 cast up by the sea, which served as cups and dippers. Their long, keen
264 belt knives were used for cutting, carving or skinning, and always the
[239] fingers for eating. They gathered in a circle around an olla of seeds of long grass growing on the sea bottom prepared by winnowing, parching and grinding, and then cooked with turtle oil. Each one dipped his or her fingers into the olla and conveyed them to the mouth without losing a drop, and licked them off with great relish.

231 The dogs eat with the family. There were six or seven half-starved
244 ones. If someone picked up a piece of turtle flipper the dog often took the first lick at it, bit off a piece or licked it before it reached the owner's mouth. The dogs were not punished. They were just slapped to keep them out of the pots.

123 We had a great time that evening in Seriland. The young man played
534 his violin. This consisted of a hollow box cut out of a *palo verde*
[229] tree, and a piece of pine about sixteen inches long; terminating in a
[283] hollow where a single peg was fitted. The one string was twisted deer
[237] sinew, and the bridge was a small round clam shell at the far end. The
[533] bow was a small bent stick and some black horsehair. On the handle was a wad of rosin fastened underneath. By fingering this string a few weak squeaky notes were made, and this was the classical music of the Seris.

Manuel Encina seized his gourd rattle and began chanting. Herrera tapped a tin can and I beat on an inverted basket and the orchestra
535 was in full swing. A young girl, Rosa, dragged out a turtle shell and
123 standing on it began to dance. This dance consisted of stepping up and down quickly with each foot alternately, and this stamping, barefooted, emitted a hollow sound. Every once in a while I let out an
[24] Indian yell which pleased the Seris very much. For two hours they had a real swell time. We took one flashlight of the proceeding.

[342] Each family was in their hut, which afforded very slight shelter
[343] as they were only partially roofed over and the sides were broken
[354] down in places. The huts were all adjoining and each had a little
[361] campfire, which did not give much illumination, so the dancing was in semi-darkness.

[text contineus on p. 163]

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123 the flesh attached. This we roasted, or broiled, by standing it on
262 edge against two stakes in front of the fire. The breast was white and tender, somewhat like roast pig, but much more delicious.

262 The Seris cut off the great flippers, dug out the entrails, and
252 whenever there was a crack in the crowd of men, women and children, there was a dog lapping the blood and chewing a shred of meat before being driven off. Men, women and children tore off pieces of the tender
[25] meat and ate it raw. The blood which gathered in the hollow of the shell was baled out and saved in an olla.

A woman took out the coils of entrails, ripped them open with her finger, squeezed out the half-digested sea grass, which resembled closely-packed boiled greens, and rinsed them in the sea. The head
[25] was skillfully disjointed, and with flippers, entrails and liver, put up on the brush roof away from the sand and dogs.

Then began the feast; half the turtle being devoured immediately.
[264] To see Blanco, which name fits neither his complexion or character, gnaw the bone and tear away the raw flesh of a turtle flipper with his strong white teeth and cruel mouth, would not require much imagination to substitute the shin bone of a human being.

All parts of the sea turtle are utilized except the bones and portions of the head. The white, flexible under-shell is roasted and eaten, but how they can masticate and digest it is a mystery. I tried it and gave it up, as did all our party. It might have been a Goodyear tire, for all the impression we made on it, but even the Seri children
• 237 eat it. The carapace is broken into small pieces and dried out in an olla, and this yields a green oil. The shell is nearly one-half inch thick and filled with minute cells which carry oil. This oil is evidently a provision of nature to prevent barnacles and marine growths from attaching to the shell. This oil is poured into a previously cleaned section of intestine, fastened at one end, and then is bottled, ready for transportation or use.

The skin of the flippers is used for sandals. The broken pieces of carapace are also used for firing ollas. The shells are used for windbreaks, for receptacles for transporting household things on women's heads, and possibly for other needs. The stomachs are stretched, probably with sand, and when dried are used for transporting water, the same as we use a canteen.

185 The Seris are always improvident. They raise no cattle. They plant
261 nothing and the only crops they raise are children and dogs. They
[23] store no food away, eat when there is plenty, go hungry when there is
[23] nothing to eat. When they will eat raw turtle meat like animals, their
[26] taste is not refined. This is evidenced when they will eat a horse or burro dead, several days---scrape off the maggots to get a chance at it.

285 [324] I watched a woman make a basket. She used young branches from the terote tree, I think *terote blanco*. The bark was peeled and shredded into two parts, the heart taken out and kept separate. The coils of the round part were put in a pot of hot water to soften, and the edge of the basket was soaked a little in hot water. The center of the coils or woof consisted of six or eight strips of heart while the outer sap wood was woven around in regular coil-weave fashion.

[287] [414] A brad of deer shin-bone sharpened on pumice to a needle point was used as a brad. With this brad she split the fiber, held one piece in her mouth, and stripped the back down. Then she punched a hole in the bone brad, inserted the sharp end of the fiber and pulled it almost through. She then repeated the operation, adding a strip of heart once in a while. These baskets are coarse and unattractive, but they are hard and tough and stand heavy use.

323 [237] [372] Cooking vessels consist of two or three cooking ollas that nest together to facilitate transportation. These are made of coarse clay, solely for utility without regard for beauty of shape, color or design. In burning these ollas they use the shell of the sea turtle. The cells of the shell are filled with a fine oil and this burns the ollas. On most of the other places on the mainland, the Indians use cow chips, or dried droppings to fire the clay.

283 484 123 [277] We proposed to shift camp to Tinajanita, our first landing place, where Herrera was to meet us in two days with the Chief and some of his men. Since it was blowing, he said the men couldn't fish and they would be on land probably hunting, so he would be able to see them. At this time they gathered *sescal* on an island off the west coast to make the liquor they used at fiestas, weddings and other celebrations.

Herrera left at five o'clock in the morning, with a swinging gait, for the opposite side of the Island. The distance around by boat would be fifty miles, and across, only about twenty or twenty-five---a full day's trip and hard, as mountains would have to be crossed and the rocks were sharp and the way difficult.

123 We had breakfast on rice and bread. Our rations are running low and we expect to move this morning. We made arrangements about the native boat and saw Blanco trot off with two five-gallon cans for water, a distance of ten miles. We went to the camp to get a few things---an old basket, a Pelican hide and other things, and then we asked the help of everybody to get the boat down to water---the tide was very low. The one man, the women and five of us were required to drag and push the boat to water.

We waved goodbye, loaded her up and then rowed against the tide and wind for miles, and finally landed in a lovely sheltered lagoon, built our fire and had lunch. A few crabs were speared, and late in the afternoon the wind shifted. We loaded the boat again and pushed off for Tinajanita, our first landing place. After rowing, we raised

[text continues on p.174]

123 Then Chico Romero and his load of children and dogs arrived and
484 he unloaded his impedimenta on the beach, and soon the women came walking along the beach and joined the party. The boats carrying the heavy things and children; the women, with their babies and a few light things on their heads, walk along the beach when possible and follow the boats, which hug the shore to avoid the strong currents and tide. The boats are propelled by paddles mostly, though some of
501 the Indians use oars. The women are slightly built, slender and in-
142 clined to be gaunt, owing to the hard life and lack of food. Their cheek bones are quite prominent and their profiles present protruding lips.

422 Having no permanent homes, moving hither and thither for their
[364] various food supply, household things are not accumulated and life is reduced to its very simplest elements and absolute necessities.

Crude baskets made from shoots of the torote tree, vessels in which to cook, and some patched rags in place of Pelican skins to serve as blankets to the fortunate few, constitute the family pos-
281 sessions. Strange to relate, many of the women have an over-supply of
[853] milk, and according to Roberto have puppies nurse what the babies cannot take. One woman was known to nurse a baby pig on one side and a puppy on the other.

[264] Family dogs lick all cooking vessels which is unnecessary as they
[894] are thoroughly clean when the Seris are through with them, and also lick the infants clean after performing their natural functions, so they are quite indispensable. I saw a Seri girl place on the sand a small can of water for a dog and then saw her drink some of the remainder and pour the rest back in a five-gallon can. Dogs frequently swim across the Infernillo to join their masters.

732 Asked about cripples and incompetents, Roberto said they probably did not exist. The conditions of survival were too precarious to admit of anyone living who was unable, by physical disability, to hunt or fish. There are two or three men who are nearly blind or so. The wives of these men eke an uncertain living for them by the hardest
262 struggle. The sea turtle is the staple; one man and one good boat can
433 secure a living for five families. There are now nine boats, but one
501 boat to a family would practically free them from continual want.
262 With the exception of four bones in the flippers and the bones of the
237 head, all the sea turtle is used---the meat, blood, entrails, shell which furnishes food and oil, skin of flippers which furnishes sandals, sinew for strings. Nothing is wasted except contents of the entrails.

123 Again, we laid our blankets on the clean white sand of the shore and were lulled to rest by the murmuring sea.

123 Daylight found us up the next morning, and we breakfasted, rolled
484 up our blankets, pushed the boats into the sea and were off by the time the sun rose over the mountains and shone over a glassy sea. Two Seris towed their boat by a tump line, while a boy of twelve steered

Chico Romero - Seri dressed in Pelican skins - 1926

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Seri Concha in Pelican skin robe or skirt - 1926

10: Davis E-5 (1922-ca. 1939) 1965 NU31 Seri NU31

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Edward H. Davis and Pelican skin robe made for him by Seri Indians - 1934